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1885

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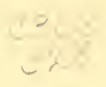
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## CHRISTINE.

Supposed to be related by a young sculptor on the  
hill-side between Florence and Fiesolè.

Gift from

~~The~~ Estate of Miss Ruth Putnam

Sept. 14, 1931







# CHRISTINE.

BY  
T. BUCHANAN READ.  
"

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ILLUSTRATED  
FROM DESIGNS BY FREDERICK DIELMAN.

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PHILADELPHIA  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.  
715 AND 717 MARKET STREET.

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Sept. 14, 1901



1885



CHRISTINE

COME, my friend,  
and in the silence  
and the shadow wrapt apart,  
I will loose the golden  
claspings of this sacred  
tome—the heart.

By the bole of yonder cedar, under branches  
spread like eaves,

We will sit where wavering sunshine weaves  
romance among the leaves.

There by gentle airs of story shall our dreamy  
minds be swayed,

And our spirits hang vibrating like the sunshine  
with the shade.

Thou shalt sit, and leaning o'er me, calmly look  
into my heart,

Look as Fiesolé above us looketh on Val d'Arno's  
mart:—







Shalt behold how

Love's fair river

down the golden city goes,

As the silent stream of Arno through the streets

of Florence flows.

I was standing o'er the marble, in the twilight  
falling gray,  
All my hopes and all my courage waning from  
me like the day:

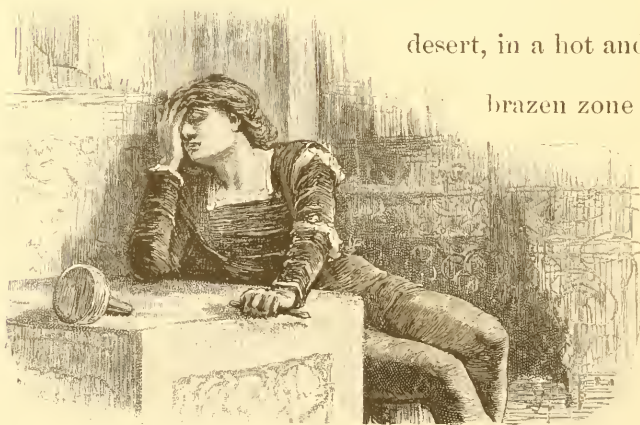
There I leaned across the statue, heaving many  
a sigh and groan,  
For I deemed the world as heartless, aye, as  
heartless as the stone!

Nay, I wellnigh thought the marble was a portion  
of my pain,  
For it seemed a frozen sorrow just without my  
burning brain.

Then a cold and deathlike stupor slowly crept  
along my frame,  
While my life seemed passing outward, like a  
pale reluctant flame.

And my weary soul went from me, and it walked  
the world alone,

O'er a wide and brazen  
desert, in a hot and  
brazen zone ;





There it walked and trailed its pinions, slowly  
trailed them in the sands,  
With its hopeless eyes fixed blindly, with its  
hopeless folded hands.

And there came no morn,—no evening with its  
gentle stars and moon,  
But the sun amid the heavens made a broad  
unbroken noon.

And anon far reaching westward, with its weight  
of burning air,  
Lay an old and desolate ocean with a dead and  
glassy stare.



There my spirit wandered gazing, for the goal  
no time might reach,  
With its weary feet unsandalled on the hard and  
heated beach.

This it is to feel uncared for, like a useless  
wayside stone,  
This it is to walk in spirit through the desolate  
world alone!

Still I leaned across the marble, and a hand was  
on my arm,  
And my soul came back unto me as 'twere  
summoned by a charm:

While a voice in gentlest whisper, breathed my  
name into my ear,  
“Ah, Andrea, why this silence, why this shadow  
and this tear?”

Then I felt that I had wronged her, though I  
knew it not before;  
I had feared that she would scorn me if I told  
the love I bore.





I had seen her, spoken to her, only twice or  
thrice perchance ;  
And her mien was fine and stately, and all heaven  
was in her glance.

She had praised my humble labors, the conception  
and the art,—  
She had said a thing of beauty nestled ever to  
her heart.

And I thought one pleasant morning when our  
eyes together met,  
That her orbs in dewy splendor dropt beneath  
their fringe of jet.

Though her form and  
air were noble, yet a  
simple dress she wore.

Like yon maiden by the  
cypress, which the vines  
are weeping o'er.

And she came  
all unattended,—  
her protection  
in her mien;

And with somewhat of  
reluctance bade me

call her name Christine.



Then that name became a music, and my dreams  
went to the time,  
And my brain all day made verses, and her  
beauty filled the rhyme.

Never dreamed I that she loved me, but I felt  
it now the more;  
For her hand was laid upon me, and her eyes  
were brimming o'er.

Oh, she looked into my spirit, as the stars look  
in the stream,  
Or as azure eyes of angels calm the trouble of  
a dream.

Then I told my love unto her, and her sighs  
came deep and long—

So yon peasant plays the measure, while the  
other leads the song.

Then with tender words we parted, only as true  
lovers can;

I for that deep love she bore me was a braver,  
better man.

I had lived unloved of any, only loving Art  
before;

Now I thought all things did love me, and I  
loved all things the more.





I had lived accursed of Fortune, lived in penury  
worse than pain ;

But, when all the heaven was blackest, down it  
showered in golden rain.

I was summoned to the palace, to the presence  
of the Duke,

Feeling hopes arise within me that no grandeur  
could rebuke.

Down he kindly came to meet me, but I thought  
the golden throne

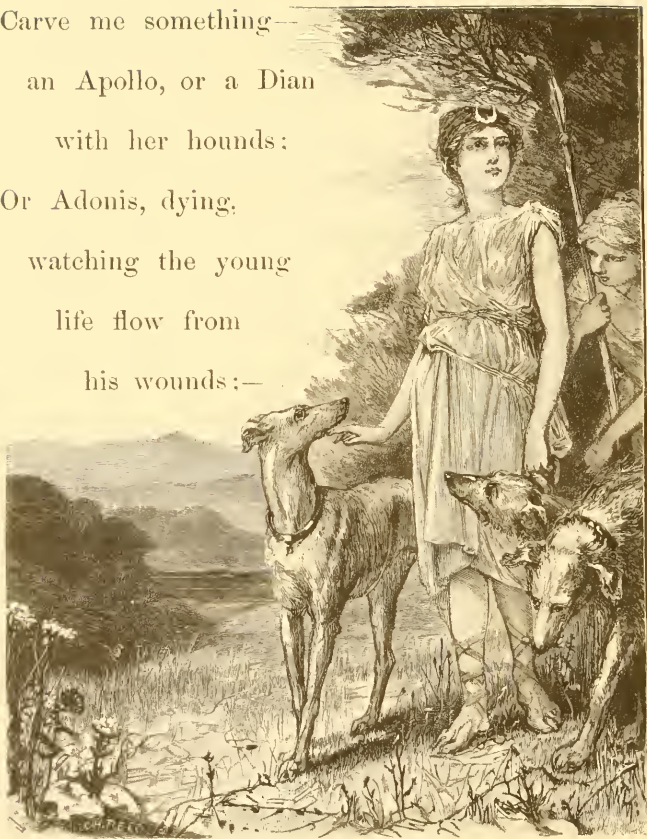
Upon which my love had raised me, was not  
lower than his own.

Then he grasped my hand with fervor, and I  
gave as warm return,  
For I felt a noble nature in my very fingers  
burn.

And I would not bow below him, if I could  
not rise above,  
For I felt within my bosom all the majesty of  
Love.

“Sir,” said he, “your fame has reached me, and  
I fain would test your skill—  
Carve me something, Signior; follow the free  
fancy of your will.

Carve me something—  
an Apollo, or a Dian  
with her hounds:  
Or Adonis, dying,  
watching the young  
life flow from  
his wounds:—



Or a dreamy-lidded Psyché, with her Cupid on  
her knee;

Or a flying fretted Daphne, taking refuge in the  
tree.

But I will not dictate, Signior; I can trust your  
taste and skill—

In the ancient armored chamber you may carve  
me what you will.”

Then I thanked him as he left me—and I walked  
the armored hall—

Even I, so late neglected, walked within the  
palace wall.





There were many suits of armor, some with  
battered breasts and casques;  
And I thought the ancestral phantoms smiled  
upon me from their masks.

And my footsteps were elastic with an energy  
divine—

Never in those breasts of iron beat a heart as  
proud as mine!

There for days I walked the chamber with a  
spirit all inflamed,  
And I thought on all the subjects which the  
generous Duke had named—

Thought of those, and thought of others, slowly  
thought them o'er and o'er,  
Till my stormy brain went throbbing like the  
surf along the shore.

In despair I left the palace, sought my humble  
room again,  
And my gentle Christine met me, and she smiled  
away my pain.

“Courage!” said she, and my courage leapt  
within me as she spake,  
And my soul was sworn to trial and to triumph  
for her sake.

Who shall say that love is idle, or a weight  
upon the mind?

Friend! the soul that dares to scorn it, hath in  
idle dust reclined.

I returned, and in the chamber piled the shape-  
less Adam-earth;

Piled it carelessly, not knowing to what form  
it might give birth.

There I leaned, and dreamed, above it, till the  
day went down the west,

And the darkness came unto me like an old  
familiar guest.

But I started, for a rustle swept athwart the  
solemn gloom!

And with light, like morn's horizon, gleamed  
the far end of the room!

Then a heavy sea of curtain, in a tempest rolled  
away!

Blessed Virgin! how I trembled! but it was not  
with dismay.

And my eyes grew large and larger, as I looked  
with lips apart;

And my senses drank in beauty, till it drowned  
my happy heart.



There it stood, a living statue! with its loosened  
locks of brown—

In an attitude angelic, with the folded hands  
dropt down.

But I could not see the features, for a veil was  
hanging there,

Yet so thin, that o'er the forehead I could trace  
the shadowy hair.

Then the veil became a trouble, and I wished  
that it were gone,

And I spake, 't was but a whisper, "Let thy  
features on me dawn!"



And the heavy sea of drapery stormed again  
across my sight,  
Leaving me appalled with wonder, breathless in  
the sudden night.

But for days, where'er I turned me, still that  
blessed form was there,  
As one looketh to the sunlight, then beholds it  
everywhere.

And for days and days I labored, with a soul  
in courage mailed;  
And I wrought the nameless statue; but, alas!  
the face was veiled.

I had tried all  
forms of feature—  
every face of  
classic art—

Still the veil was  
there—I felt it—  
in my brain, and  
in my heart!

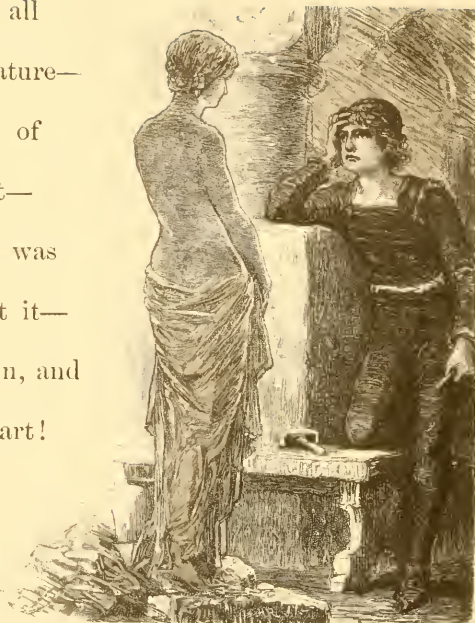
Sorrowing,

I left the

palace, and again I met Christine,

And she trembled as I told her of the vision

I had seen.



And she sighed, "Ah, dear Andrea," while she  
clung unto my breast,  
"What if this should prove a phantom, some-  
thing fearful and unblest—

Something which shall pass between us?" and  
she clasped me with her arm;  
"Nay," I answered, "love, I'll test it with a  
most angelic charm.

Let me gaze upon thy features, love, and fear  
not for the rest;  
They shall exorcise the spirit if it be a thing  
unblest!"



Then I hurried to the statue, where so often I  
had failed,  
And I made the face of Christine, and it stood  
no longer veiled!

With a flush upon my forehead, then I called  
the Duke—he came,  
And in rustling silks beside him walked his tall  
and stately dame;

And they looked upon the statue—then on me  
with stern surprise;  
Then they looked upon each other with a wonder  
in their eyes!

“What is this?” spake out the Duchess, with  
her gaze fixed on the Duke;  
“What is this?” and me he questioned in a  
tone of sharp rebuke.

Like a miserable echo, I the question asked  
again—

And he said, “It is our daughter! your presumption for your pain!”

But asudden from the curtain, in her jewelled  
dress complete,  
Swept a maiden in her beauty, and she dropped  
before his feet—





And she cried, "O! father—mother, cast aside  
that frowning mien;  
And forgive my own Andrea, and forgive your  
child Christine!

O! forgive us: for, believe me, all the fault was  
mine alone!"

And they granted her petition, and they blessed  
us as their own.









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